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## V.

# THE EMPIRE OF THE DISCONTENTED.\*

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It has been often remarked that foreigners visiting Russia derive from their journey widely different impressions, according to the social classes they had intercourse with, their personal experience, and still more, perhaps, according to the institutions, habits, and customs of their own country. Indeed, there scarcely can be found another country about which so many different opinions exist as about Russia. It appears to be something of a modern sphinx—a puzzle for all mankind, an unraveled and incomprehensible mystery.

That the present state of Russia is most deplorable is a plain fact, which is beyond doubt and discussion. The Russian press itself freely admits it. "Russia has become an empire of the discontented!" exclaimed the celebrated Katkoff, in his "Moscow Gazette," shortly after the war, and this expression has been echoed by the whole public opinion in Russia, and given a theme to all the press. Reviewing the abominable cases of corruption which the last war has disclosed, the "St. Petersburg News" says in a recent issue: "The moral standard of our society seems to have sunk so low that we have utterly lost the faculty of distinguishing right from wrong, honor from baseness, patriotism from egotism. In almost every representative of our official spheres we are led to suspect a rascal and a thief. We distrust each other, we believe no more in ourselves, all honest principles seem to have become an empty phrase; and a cold skepticism in all things not pertaining directly to our personal interests seems to have taken hold of the whole nation." Still more violent in its expressions is the "Novoye Vremja" ("New Time"), the leading St. Petersburg paper. "What a time we are living in!" it exclaims. "Every day brings new dis-

\* This article is printed unaltered in the author's own English.—EDDTON.

closures, on all sides we are surrounded with rascals who have long ago lost all sense of their moral debasement. In this pestiferous atmosphere honest hearts lose their energy, gradually sink lower and lower, or are crushed in fruitless attempts to shake off the curse lying upon us." Such is the picture of utter demoralization drawn by the Russian press. Muzzled as it is by a barbarous censorship, it can certainly not be suspected of exaggeration. If we add to this picture financial exhaustion and utter impoverishment of the laboring classes caused by an exorbitant and disproportionate taxation, we shall convey to the reader a fair idea of the terrible crisis through which Russia is now passing, and exclude the suspicion of attempting to conceal its importance.

Is this state of affairs hopeless? Is it the agony of the Russian nation? Has the latter played out its part in history, and is this the beginning of an utter decomposition? There is every reason to believe that such is not the case. The nation itself is safe and sound—the *czardom* alone, that cancer which has for centuries sucked the life's blood out of the Russian people, with its whole train, is rotting off and falling to pieces. What the world is now witnessing is the *agony of Russian autocracy*. The *czardom* alone is the true cause of all the misery Russia has endured for centuries and is now still enduring. With its overthrow the nation will breathe freely, and will at last be able to develop all its latent energies. Few foreigners, and especially few citizens of a free country, can form an adequate idea of what the Russian Czar actually is, and of the necessary consequences of the power he is endowed with. I have had occasion to meet several Americans in St. Petersburg who, charmed by the pleasant intercourse with the representatives of the Russian court and high life, were rather inclined to consider the Russian Government a sort of paternal and comfortable arrangement, saving the peaceful citizen a good deal of trouble and expense, and forming a necessary part of the Russian national institutions. The truth, however, is that the *czardom* is not at all of Russian origin. It was born out of the Tartar yoke, which has weighed on Russia for two centuries. The Asiatic despotism of the Khans crushed all independent classes and political organizations in Russia; and the Czars of Moscow, after driving away the Tartars, continued the same policy, and achieved the work begun by their Moslem predecessors.

The power concentrated in the Russian Czars is without precedent in history, and has at all times exerted a most fatal influence

on public life in Russia as well as on the personal character of the Czars themselves. Trained to a slavish obedience and to the belief that the personal will of one man and not the law was the guiding principle of their whole existence, the people gradually sank into that political and intellectual apathy from which even now the mass of the Russian peasantry has not yet awakened. The Government took in the popular imagination the form of a law of Nature, the effects of which could neither be foreseen nor avoided, but only like those of Nature deified and adored. Not only to the people, however, but to the Czars themselves has their power become a curse. Feeling the awful responsibility weighing on them, they naturally sought to alleviate it by giving their power a divine character. Every one of their acts they began to consider as the will of God, themselves as His instruments, and every man who dared to oppose them as an insolent atheist not recognizing the dictates of Heaven, for whom no punishment could appear too cruel and severe. In a certain sense the opinion is well founded, that all Russian Czars were more or less maniacs. A human mind can not bear the strain put on it by the exercise of an almost divine power. It naturally acquires a morbid disposition, which takes different forms, according to the character and energy of each individual. A man with an undaunted will and energy becomes a maniac of his own power, a cold-blooded tyrant, in whose eyes the strict maintenance of his "divine" rights becomes a religion, a creed it is his duty to uphold. The prototype of this species of "Cæsarean" mania is to be found in our century in the person of Nicholas I., the present Emperor's father.

In order to understand rightly the present state of affairs in Russia, we must devote some of our space to the characteristics of that extraordinary man. Nicholas was the type of a convinced autocrat—of an autocrat "by the grace of God." In him all the traditions of ancient czardom were personified; he exercised his power not only as a right, but as a holy duty, imposed on him by Providence, and crushed his enemies, not from personal hatred or out of governmental interests, but simply as a work of heavenly justice.

An episode which happened in 1848 with a member of my own family will best serve to illustrate this feature in the character of the "Iron Czar." A relation of mine, who was then a student at the St. Petersburg University, had, with a few friends, formed a literary society, in which the works of contemporary political economists,

publicists, and philosophers, were read and debated. One of the innumerable spies of the secret police denounced the society as a "secret revolutionary organization," and my relative, as president thereof. The latter was of course arrested, locked up in one of the underground cells of the St. Petersburg fortress, and summarily condemned, by a special military court, to transportation to Siberia for life.

All the influence which our family possessed in high quarters was brought to bear on the Czar, but all in vain. At last the mother of the prisoner, meeting the Czar one day during one of his solitary walks in the Summer Garden, threw herself at his feet, averring her son's innocence, and imploring his pardon. The Czar seemed to be profoundly touched. He raised the old lady with the most chivalrous and pitying deference, and promised her to reconsider her son's case, and to have a personal interview with him. Nicholas was true to his word. The very next day the young culprit was brought out of his cell, and, a few moments later, he stood alone before the Emperor. The latter took him by the hand, led him before an image of the Saviour suspended in a corner of the room, and, forcing him down on his knees, exclaimed :

"Can you swear before the Almighty God that neither you nor your associates had any criminal design against my life? Can you swear that you believe in the holiness and eternity of the Russian autocracy?"

As soon as the prisoner had recovered from his unbounded surprise, he answered :

"I can swear to your Majesty that neither I nor any of my friends had the remotest design against your safety. As to the autocratic form of government, I can not conscientiously swear that I believe in its eternity. The history of other countries teaches us that the time must come, even in Russia, when the people itself will take part in its government."

The Czar answered not a syllable, embraced the young man with almost paternal tenderness, and drawing a ring from his own finger gave it to him, saying :

"This is a token of respect from your Czar. You have been sincere and truthful to me ; and there is nothing I hate so much as a lie."

He then approached his writing-table, on which the sentence of the court concerning my relative was lying, and with one stroke of the pen—signed the paper !

"I pity you from the bottom of my heart," he said ; "you are an honest man, and an honest man, true to his convictions, is more dangerous to autocracy than an unprincipled rascal. Therefore I must punish you, though never was this duty more painful to me than now. God bless you, my son, and judge me mercifully if I should appear to be in the wrong."

And, once more embracing his victim, he led him to the door.

This story, every particular of which I have heard from my relative himself, who, at the beginning of the present reign, was pardoned and returned to St. Petersburg, depicts vividly the peculiarities of Nicholas's great but entirely deranged mind. The holiness of his position, as defender of autocracy, became a mania, an *idée fixe*, for which he would have sacrificed his life as he did those of others, if the occasion of doing so had presented itself. Nicholas may have been called the "Brutus of autocracy." Like all the princes of the Romanoff family, he had received but a miserable education. Accustomed from childhood to deal either with fawning courtiers or with severely disciplined soldiers, he considered a soldier the ideal of a true citizen, implicit obedience the only civic virtue, and a barrack the model of political organization. In his mind a spirit of military discipline was to pervade the whole country. The free will of each citizen was limited by the scope of his private life. In all public matters the "holy power" of the Czar reigned paramount, and not only criticism, but a plain discussion, even a thorough knowledge of such matters on the part of a private citizen, was considered criminal.

This horrible system, which only the morbid imagination of a maniac could have invented, was carried out with a merciless logic and a set purpose, as only a great mind, great even in its aberrations, is capable of. The public schools were managed on a thoroughly military plan. Learning by heart was the chief occupation, and all sciences were "arranged" specially for Russia, so as not to give the slightest possible occasion for liberal theories or religious skepticism. In ancient history, for instance, the Roman Republic was entirely eliminated. From the kings the pupils had to skip over to the emperors, and the intermediate period was done away with the sentences : "After Tarquinius the Roman people became unruly and revolted against the legal authorities. A time of hideous disturbance followed until Julius Cæsar appeared," etc. The history of France was taught only up to Louis XV. The history of Russia was distorted in all possible ways, so as to conceal all that could

have been interpreted unfavorably for some of the Czars. It seems scarcely credible, and yet it is but the plain truth, that until the present day the facts of the murder of Peter III. by his wife Catharine, and of Paul I. by a conspiracy of noblemen, of which the poor maniac's own son, the "gentle" Alexander I., was the guiding spirit, are not admitted to publication in Russia, and severely proscribed from all school-books!

To say that the public press was muzzled beyond description would scarcely give an adequate idea of the reality such as it was. Not only was all discussion of public affairs strictly forbidden, but even silence on certain matters was often considered a crime. Many instances may be cited of publications having been suppressed, not because they criticised the Government, but because they *did not praise* it sufficiently!

As I have said, this system was carried out by Nicholas with that steadfast logic and settled purpose peculiar to maniacs. His whole life, all the faculties of a naturally powerful mind, had been devoted to training the people into a nation of crippled idiots and knaves. When after the crash of the Crimean war this terrible truth began to dawn upon him—when the stern, merciless hand of History showed him the abyss of corruption, rascality, ignorance, and apathy into which he had cast his people by carrying out what he deemed to be the will of God—then the "Iron Czar" broke down like a reed and died. It is well known to the initiated in court matters at St. Petersburg that on his deathbed he confided to his son, the present Emperor, the secret of his broken life, and made him swear to adopt a series of liberal measures, and before all the emancipation of the serfs, which was accordingly accomplished in 1861.

A more striking contrast of character can scarcely be imagined than that which exists between Nicholas and his son and successor Alexander II. If the former presents a typical instance of the effects of czardom on a powerful, manly, and energetic mind, the latter illustrates, on the contrary, the perhaps still more direful influence of absolute power on a weak mind. Alexander received, under the auspices of the poet Joukoffsky, a somewhat better education than is generally awarded to the princes of the Romanoff family. But at the same time this education inculcated in the mind of the young prince that vague, purposeless sentimentality of the romantic school of which Joukoffsky was one of the distinguished representatives. Combined with his naturally weak, imaginative, and unsettled dis-

position, the romantic education he received exercised a pernicious influence on the further development of his faculties, impairing their energy and destroying that clearness and precision of thought which is the *conditio sine qua non* for an able ruler. Alexander's character can be defined in one sentence : he has not will enough to be good, and he is not good enough to have a will. Keenly aware of the heavy responsibility which rests on him, he constantly wavers between two opposite resolutions; he ponders sometimes whole years over one decision, and, when he at last carries it out, the right time for it is generally past, and it has long ago "lost the name of action." Hamlet on the throne, endowed with an almost superhuman power of doing good or evil, is the true picture of the Czar Alexander I. That such a character is open to all influences, that it mistakes obstinacy for strength of will, and is unable to distinguish, in the practice of government, truth from falsehood and good from evil, need scarcely be added.

Indeed, the present reign has as many phases as the Czar has had favorites, each phase retaining the peculiar tint of indecision and incompleteness cast on it by the Czar's personal character. The first years of the present reign awakened in the hearts of the Russian people the most sanguine hopes. Almost immediately after the death of Nicholas the whole system of government changed abruptly. The preparatory measures to the emancipation of the serfs were begun, the press was given a freedom of speech altogether unprecedented in Russia, the system of instruction underwent a most radical reform; the courts, the army, the local administration, in short, every branch of government, was revised and reformed, and a new life seemed to spring up amid the ruins of the former tyranny. A powerful liberal movement seized Russian society. Everything seemed possible and attainable. Out of the maddest tyranny Russia was to leap with one stride into the most accomplished liberalism, guided by an enlightened, benevolent Czar. Liberalism became the fashion, even at court. Of course even then, in the midst of this orgy of liberalism, men were to be found who were not blind enough to believe that the work of centuries could be effaced in a few days. In all the liberal excitement of the moment these skeptics could perceive little more than a passing fashion, a childish play with liberty on the part of a society which scarcely understood the true meaning of the word. And the event proved that they were right. An address, presented by the nobility of Moscow to the Czar, demanding an aristocratic



constitution, as a sort of compensation for the losses the nobility had sustained by the emancipation of the serfs, gave the first impulse to an abrupt change of politics. The address was received very ungraciously; the ringleaders of the whole concern were advised to retire to their estates for some time, in order to meditate at leisure on the true nature of Russian liberalism, and the very first occasion was seized upon to remind the "Liberals" that "autocracy was a heavenly institution, and that every attempt at anything which might possibly resemble a constitution was in future to be considered as an offense against his Imperial Majesty, and punished according to law"—a rather uncomfortable threat, meaning death, or Siberia.

It now became evident that a painful misunderstanding had prevailed all round. Like all natures endowed with a strong and morbid imagination, and but a weak mind and will, Alexander had built up his ideal of an autocratic millennium in all its slightest particulars. By his courtiers and by some of the half-crazy idealists of the old Slavophile school this dream was received with unbounded enthusiasm. When it was shattered to pieces by the "ingratitude" of the people, when it became apparent that what the people were impudent enough to desire was liberty, and not "paternal benevolence," the Czar's disenchantment was bitter, and gave the first impulse to that morbid melancholy which further events developed in his mind to the extent of a mental malady.

The ordinary consequences of political repression followed: the revolutionary movement became more intense. "Conspiracies" were almost daily discovered by the police. At last came the catastrophe: on the 16th of April, 1866, a crazy young fanatic, almost a child, Karakozoff by name, fired a shot at the Emperor while the latter was stepping into his carriage after a walk in the Summer Garden. This fatal shot marked a turning point in the Czar's policy toward his subjects, and opened the career of a man who richly deserves the name of an evil genius of modern Russia, in whom Russian autocracy with all its decay and hypocrisy found an able, unscrupulous, and powerful representative. This man is the now celebrated Count Peter Shouvaloff, at present Russian Ambassador at the court of Great Britain, and the probable successor of Prince Gortchakoff to the office of Chancellor of the Empire. Immediately after Karakozoff's *attentat*, Shouvaloff was summoned to the post of "Chief of the Third Section of his Majesty's Private Chancery," and the task of prosecuting the criminal and of extirpating

the "revolutionary party" in Russia to the very roots was intrusted to him.

Citizens of a free country are scarcely able to form an adequate idea of the true nature of this terrible and profoundly demoralizing institution. The "Third Section" is a great deal more than a secret police for political cases. It is in every sense the true and full expression of the Czar's supreme power; it is the organ and instrument of his personal will; it stands accordingly above all the laws, the institutions, and even the civil rights of each citizen. Its agents are spread all over the country, exercising a secret control over every officeholder, every provincial institution—the governor of the province himself not excepted, who is generally the first to quail before its secret power. It is clear that, so long as this institution exists, every law, every liberal reform, is but a mockery.

A history of the secret doings, of all the horrors and crimes, perpetrated by this disgraceful institution, would fill up many volumes, before the contents of which the most sensational novels would appear tame and shallow. There is scarcely any sphere of public or private life which is exempted from the irresponsible control of this inquisition of the nineteenth century. The verdict of a court has no value whatever for the Third Section. Not only acquitted political offenders are as a rule transported "administratively" to some distant town of the empire, but even the judges themselves, when they are considered to have passed too lenient a verdict, are liable to be forced into resigning their office and to be then exiled in company with the very prisoners who had stood before them!

Such is the institution at the head of which Shouvaloff was placed in 1866; such was the power given into his hands which made him in one year the actual master of Russia. Shouvaloff is a man of more than ordinary intellectual abilities, admirably suited for a post such as the one he occupied. Endowed with a profound knowledge of human nature, he understood at a glance the character of the Czar. He knew how to maintain the Czar in a state of perpetual nervous excitement by reporting almost daily about new conspiracies in a most distorted and exaggerated shape, leading him to the belief that the whole of Russia was covered by a net of a murderous and bloodthirsty revolutionary organization. Alexander lived in constant fear of assassins, and had a revolver always at hand. Once his aide-de-camp, Ryleeff, entering unexpectedly the

imperial private study, the Czar sprang up in dismay and fired at him, happily missing his aim.

Repressive measures against the press, the provincial elective assemblies (the *zemstvo*), the universities, and the new law courts, followed almost daily. A true and able disciple of that political adventurer *par excellence*, Napoleon III., Shouvaloff knew how to deprive public life in Russia even of that phantom of liberty which had been awarded by the "liberal" Czar; how to tear out of the new institutions their spirit, without touching their outward, civilized form. In the repression he exercised against every spark of independent spirit in Russian society, he artfully evaded any offense to that peculiar feeling of tact which is innate in persons of good breeding and high social standing: he carefully dealt with every case according to the social reputation and family position of the inculpated persons; he could discriminate between those who could be struck and crushed in the most merciless and brutal manner and those toward whom forms of a chivalrous and accomplished civility must be observed.

A personal experience of mine admirably illustrates this trait in the character of the "Great Russian Spy," as the Londoners called Shouvaloff. In 1872 I was an editorial writer on the staff of a weekly paper at St. Petersburg. This paper still exists, and I am therefore compelled from obvious reasons not to name it. Through the literary position I occupied, I naturally came into contact with all the stirring, turbulent, and intelligent elements of the Russian *bohème*—students, artists, young officers of the army, teachers in public schools, literary men, and such like—all of whom were anything but loyal subjects of the Czar, and therefore all *personæ ingratis* in the eyes of the St. Hermandad. At the same time, in consequence of some family ties and traditions, I was intimately acquainted with some of the first aristocratic families of the capital, and had thus access to that mysterious and undefinable sphere which the French call "the world." One evening I was called upon to read a paper about "Socialism in Russia," before a literary society we had formed. In the very midst of my oratorical effort I was interrupted by the clash of sabers in the anteroom, and there appeared suddenly among us a man, clad in that awful blue uniform of the gendarmes, the executive agents of the Third Section. In the most civil manner possible he invited us to disperse, an invitation we of course acted upon immediately. At the door we met another "blue gentleman," who took down our names and addresses,

warning us of the consequences if any one should venture to give a false statement. The very same night I received a summons to appear the next day at two P. M. at the Third Section, or in the "building near the suspension bridge," as this amiable institution is usually called in St. Petersburg, from the locality it occupies. There an amiable and smooth-tongued official gave me fair warning that, if I should again be seized by a desire to express my opinions on socialism, the Government would be happy to give me the occasion for meditating further on the subject in the quiet town of Belozersk, and then let me go, after warning me that I had henceforth to consider myself under the strictest surveillance of the secret police. On coming home I found to my utter amazement on my writing-table an envelope, adorned with the Shouvaloffs' crest and coat-of-arms, and containing an invitation to a great ball which was to take place the next day in the same building which I had left a few moments before a suspected "Nihilist" and revolutionist!

In such petty details of tact and urbanity Shouvaloff was always a master, and it is principally by such means that he succeeded in conciliating to his policy all such representatives of superficial liberalism for whom public life and liberty were not an earnest necessity but only a play and a fashion. At the same time he carried out a system of preventive measures all directed to one purpose—that of diverting the public mind from political interests. Just like his master in Machiavelianism, Napoleon, he used public amusements, feasts, and pageants, even if they were of more than doubtful morality, as a diversion for the exuberant energies of society. Debauchery of every kind was patronized, the imagination of the ablest and best classes of the people was systematically perverted, their senses were flattered in every manner, and their mind and reason left as barren as possible. Liquor-shops, night restaurants with private parlors adorned in the most luxurious manner, low theatres specially dedicated to *can-can*, where performers and public chiefly belonged to the lowest class of fallen women, and other establishments of the same or of a worse kind, enjoyed an active protection on the part of the police, while public lectures, schools, newspapers, books—in short, every function of public thought and opinion—were subjected to a most tyrannical control of half a dozen police authorities.

The effects of this dastardly system of government were terrific, indeed more dangerous for the development of the nation than even

the tyranny of a madman like Nicholas. Lying and hypocrisy became the officially recognized principles in politics, and gradually invaded all the spheres of public life. A generation of knaves suddenly sprang up, invading all the branches of the government service, of the financial and economical institutions. With resounding phrases about liberty, honesty, and civic duty on their lips, this "new generation," these beloved children of the "liberal" czardom, inaugurated an epoch of corruption and demoralization unprecedented in the history of their country. The members of the imperial family themselves took the lead on this glorious path. The brothers and other relatives of the Czar were foremost in robbing the people, and took the lion's share of the booty. The education received by the princes of the Romanoff family mostly stands on a level with that of a groom in civilized communities. Their habitual associates are the most despicable and unprincipled snobs among the *jeunesse dorée* of the capital and French *courtisanes*.

More or less all the Russian princes come up to that level. They pass their whole life in brutal idleness, whiling away their time with drinking, gambling, and hunting. As far as education and knowledge is concerned, there is perhaps but one exception to this general rule: that is the Grand Duke Constantine Nicolajevitch, brother of the Czar, President of the Council of State, the supreme legislative body of the empire, and admiral-general of the Russian fleet. He is a man of more than ordinary intellectual ability, well informed, and possessing a keen appreciation for the fine arts: his palace is the constant rendezvous of artists, *littérateurs*, musicians, and singers. But, on the other hand, the Russian people have to pay dearly for the luxury of possessing a well-educated Romanoff: among the studies which Constantine has pursued with the most complete success, the science of bribery stands paramount. He has managed to discount his influence as President of the Council of State in the most profitable manner. Every new railway, manufacturing or banking company, which applies to the Government for incorporation, has to pay Constantine, of course not personally, but through half a dozen agents and sub-agents, a handsome tribute. Also the accounts of many a ship-building firm might, if published, tell curious tales about how expensive an article a clever and educated member of the Romanoff family actually is.

This remark, however, does not imply that stupid and badly educated grand dukes prove less expensive to the country than clever ones. A recent example has proved the contrary; that of

the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolajevitch, the commander-in-chief of the Russian army during the last Bulgarian campaign. The general opinion about that man in Russia *before* the war was, that he was a thoroughly ignorant, stupid, but honest and brave soldier. Recent events have proved, however, that if the former part of this judgment is correct the same can not be said of its latter part. The fact is now generally known in Russia that the Grand Duke Nicholas, the brother of the Czar, the generalissimo of the army, not only brought this army to the verge of ruin by his utter imbecility as a commander, but actually *robbed* the miserable, hungry, dying soldiers of *seven million rubles*, of which he gave a handsome share to his mistress, a former opera-dancer! I must earnestly request the reader to bear in mind that this is not idle gossip: the fact has been officially proved and reported to the Czar by General Greigh, the present chief of the Russian Finance Department, who was sent by the Czar to Bulgaria to investigate the terrific cases of corruption which occurred during the war. Greigh went earnestly to work, and the very first result he obtained from his investigation was that the Czar's brother was the chief criminal. Horror-stricken, he started at once for St. Petersburg and reported to the Czar—the truth. The investigation was immediately closed, and General Greigh received the Finance Department as price for his silence.

These examples, drawn from the life of two of the most prominent members of the Czar's family, will suffice to characterize the latter as a whole. With one or two exceptions (among these the Czarevitch, who, under the beneficent influence of his wife, the Danish Princess Dagmar, has as yet held aloof from the filth surrounding him), not one single prince of the Romanoff family can be named whose existence is not a burden to the people and a nuisance to society.

The different departments of civil service (with the exception of the law courts, where honest officials predominate) present an aspect which is in no way more pleasing than the picture I have drawn of the imperial family. Foremost stands the ministry of the imperial court, which is considered a sort of patrimony of the Adlerberg family. The old Count Adlerberg, a friend of Emperor Nicholas (the *chronique scandaleuse* of the Russian court has a good deal to say about the primary motives of this *friendship*), was the chief of this petty dynasty. His son succeeded him in office, and all the different departments of the ministry have been adroitly distributed among brothers, nephews, and cousins of the family. The chief,

and in the eyes of the uninitiated the only, purpose for which this ministry exists is the payment of the Adlerberg family debts. Every four or five years some six or seven hundred thousand rubles are paid off in this way out of the public Treasury. The good example of the chiefs is naturally followed by the minor officials, and thus the Russian court has been converted into a very den of burglars and thieves, in which corruption and bribery is exercised quite openly with a sort of refreshing *naïveté*.

What abyss of corruption has been disclosed in the War Department by the last war is too well known to need any illustration on my part. In all the Government offices in which money-making business is transacted we meet with the same system of bribery and venality. The party who best knows how to find the right man for the right price is assured of success, even if its case be as bad and as illegal as possible. Of course I do not wish to imply by this that every Russian official is a thief. In the Government offices hundreds of honest men are to be found, who abominate the system under which they are compelled to serve. But in most cases they are powerless. Only the drudgery work is intrusted to them; the actual power rests in the hands of those who are unscrupulous enough to acquire it at any price. Examples illustrating this fact are so numerous that to choose among them is extremely difficult. I will mention but a few names of dignitaries who are known beyond the Russian frontier.

General Mesentzoff, the victim of the recent murder, began his service as a penniless officer of obscure family. By a series of unscrupulous manipulations, and base services rendered to persons of high standing, he obtained a position in the corps of the dreaded secret police, and since then identified himself entirely with all its darkest intrigues. By malpractice of every kind he rose gradually higher and higher, until he became the chief of the whole institution, and a rich man. Trepoff, "the honest father Trepoff," as he was universally called at St. Petersburg, from a penniless foundling educated by charity, became the absolute master of the Russian capital, and was on retiring from office in the undisturbed possession of three million rubles. The same may be said of the former Minister of Finance, Von Reutern, who, though an "honest German," has during his ministry succeeded in investing over one million rubles in foreign bonds, without counting the shares he possesses in Russian enterprises of every description.

"*Tel maître, tel valet,*" says a French proverb. It is natural

that the example set by the members of the imperial family and by the first dignitaries of the realm should be acted on by the subordinate agents of the Administration. And as, generally speaking, the higher social classes in Russia, that portion of Russian society which, though improperly, bears the name of aristocracy, are almost entirely absorbed by the Government service, the effect of such a state of things on public life and public morals generally may be easily imagined. The younger generation of Russian aristocrats presents a pitiful sight indeed. A cold-blooded, cynical materialism, scarcely varnished over with a superficial education and elegance of manners, treating honor, devotion to principles, and political convictions, as so many "humbugs," unworthy of a true child of the nineteenth century—such is the main feature of the present generation of Russian aristocrats. It is perfectly astonishing in what measure all moral feeling has died out among them. The worst slander and the highest praise seem to have lost all their significance in the leading circles of Russian society. The social standing of each individual is determined by a series of petty characteristics: his good breeding, his appearance, his wealth, sometimes his way of tying his cravat or putting on his gloves—all these undefinable nonentities which, put together, form the outward shape of a *jeune homme comme il faut*. From such things as these depends what in St. Petersburg one is pleased to call a *reputation*. The rest is of secondary importance. A man may be a gambler, a swindler, or worse—if he is but endowed with that peculiar varnish of genteelness and *savoir vivre* which society requires from him, he is welcome everywhere all the same.

One brilliant "swell," the favorite of the ladies, the leader of all the cotillions, owes his fortune, his social and administrative career, to the good graces of a lady *friend*, who happens to be at the same time the *friend* of a rich and powerful statesman. Another has been repeatedly caught cheating at cards, but, as he is indirectly related to a member of the imperial family, one gladly overlooks his "little peculiarities." There exists in St. Petersburg a whole set of the most fashionable and *fast* young men in society—officers of the guards, sons of old princely families, aide-de-camps of grand dukes and of the highest dignitaries of the Russian army—who, not being rich enough to pay for the life they are leading, contrive to discount their social position most dexterously by serving in a certain sense as living advertisements for commercial establishments, restaurants, horse-dealers, and such like, all of whom they



never pay, remunerating them indirectly by bringing them into "fashion." Among the business establishments thus enjoying the young aristocrats' protection the boudoirs of the *demi-monde* naturally occupy a prominent position. Such facts are perfectly well known to everybody, and do not impair in the least the social position of such men. On the contrary, they are the envied and admired models of fashion and good breeding; for them every door, from the gates of the imperial palace to the back door of a French variety singer's apartment, is opened far and wide; they are the future dignitaries of the empire; a brilliant career is opening before them!

Around this rotten, glittering "aristocracy" a whole swarm of speculators, swindlers, money-lenders, business men of every description, clusters, who, like dogs, feed from the crumbs falling from their master's table, and carry corruption, and decay even into the middle classes of society.

This is one side of the picture. Such are the "leading classes" of Russian society, as the "holy czardom" has shaped them. And the people? And those seventy millions of unknown, unheard-of human creatures who are strewed on the endless expanse of land between the Pacific Ocean and the Niemen, the White and the Black Seas?

There, all around, as Nekrassoff, the great poet of the woes and vices of modern Russia, sings—there, "in the depth of Russia, eternal stillness reigns!"—"Eternal stillness" over the fields on which, bending over his plow, the peasant toils from dawn to nightfall; "eternal stillness" in those dark, dreary, dilapidated villages with their black, smoky huts looking more like kennels than like human abodes; "eternal stillness" in the soul of that great, heroic nation, which with its hands' unrequited toil, with its hearts' blood, has made Russia what it now is, reaping for its reward but misery, ignorance, injustice of every kind; "eternal stillness" in the heart of that nation which still lies prostrate before its Czars, before the real and only origin of all its misery!

Such is the true picture of that "dark realm" the brilliant surface of which is mostly alone seen by foreign observers. And yet, disconsolate as this picture may appear, it is far from being hopeless. It would be so if the corruption and demoralization of the upper classes and of the Government pervaded the whole body of the nation, and did not arouse any indignation nor any active opposition on the part of the honest elements of the people. But such is not

the case. An opposition exists and it grows daily in strength and numbers, gathering around its banner all the stout hearts and honest minds of the nation.

Those are not rightly informed who think that the revolutionary movement now going on in Russia is the work of one party or of a secret society of any kind. It is the work of all intelligent Russian citizens, to whatever class of society they may belong, who are tired of the yoke Russia has borne for so many centuries, and who consider political liberty and the downfall of autocracy the necessary condition of all further progress of the Russian people. The name of this party, if it still may be called a party, is—*legion*. It is everywhere and nowhere. Representatives of the noblest families of the empire, professional men of every description, government officials and even priests, school-teachers, and army officers—all are to be found in the ranks of this great “army of the Discontented.” The powerful machinery of Russian bureaucracy has long ago been undermined by this spirit of discontent, and it is now little more than a sham weapon in the hands of the Czar. He himself in his Winter Palace is surrounded either by cowards who will forsake him, as soon as their personal interest will no more depend on the maintenance of his power, or by secret converts to the great liberal movement who will gladly contribute to the overthrow of that same *régime* they are ostensibly serving.

Thus, from the present state of Russian society we may venture to predict with a considerable amount of probability that the Russian czardom will soon sink beneath the weight of its own decrepitude and of the merciless logic of history. Then, and only then, the true national life of Russia will begin; the vital forces of the nation will be enabled to act freely, and the scum of Russian society, which now holds the supreme power in its hands, will be wiped away from the surface of political events.

A RUSSIAN NIHILIST.